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ABSTRACT

The problem of student crime and violence goes beyond the school to include parents, the community, institutions, and agencies at all levels. This report attempts to identify indicators of disruption in a school system and then makes short- and long-range recommendations for handling them. Some of the recommendations include interpersonal training, cooperation with business and industry, and a goal-directed group counseling program. The end of the pamphlet lists names and addresses of members of a Michigan committee on student behavior and parental involvement. (Author/LD)

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STUDENT BEHAVIOR AND PARENTAL / COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT: IMPACTING FOR CHANGE

EA 012 142

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FOREWORD

It seemingly has become an annual ritual in the poll results for teachers throughout the country to consistently rank discipline, or lack thereof, as the major problem facing education. And granted there are many schools that grapple with the sticky and often frustrating daily difficulties of student misbehavior.

Not all elementary and secondary schools, however, suffer under the weight of crime and violence. Most operate on a relatively satisfactory basis. But many also consistently confront varying levels of violence and vandalism. The problems are recurrent in all kinds of school districts, urban, suburban and, to a lesser extent, rural.

Student misbehavior problems — discipline — never exists in isolation, but rather are intimately related to *students* and their perceptions; to *teachers* and their expectations and attitudes; to *administrators and agencies*, and their interpretation of responsibility and authority; and to *parents and the community*, and their involvement and sensitivity to helping to create a home-school-community climate conducive to educational development.

Problems of student discipline and delinquency will *not* go away, nor be solved through simple isolated approaches, such as temporary, nondirected programs or introduction of new techniques. Rev. Jesse Jackson has repeatedly stated in his cross country appeal urging "the pursuit of excellence" that the parents are the key to improving student attitudes and achievement, and teacher performance. This is true, but there are other factors.

Research informs us that positive and healthy individual growth and self-fulfillment results from a synthesis of child development, interpersonal relationships, identity, self-concept and change. Hence, the ultimate solution to improved relationships and improved discipline among students, teachers, administrators, parents and the community lies in the development of relationships based on mutual respect, trust and understanding.

It is with these ideals and goals in mind that this document was conceived and hopefully will be implemented.

John W. Porter

April 1978

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Within the past several years "violence and vandalism in schools" has developed into a serious and continuing problem that all of us face in education, and in all phases of society.

There have been a series of studies on the issue, the most comprehensive being The Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency headed by Senator Birch Bayh. In its opening pages the 1975 Subcommittee report stated that:

> "... violence and vandalism is reaching crisis proportions which seriously threaten the ability of our educational system to carry out its primary function."

Just this past January 1978, Dr. Joseph Califano, Jr., Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, appeared on national television to express his grave concerns as to the problems in our schools generated by student crime and violence. The factual basis of his comments was the recently completed study by the National Institute of Education entitled: *Violent Schools — Safe Schools: The Safe School Study Report to the Congress*.

This report concludes that the "evidence from a number of studies and official sources indicates that acts of violence and property destruction in schools increased throughout the 1960's to the early 1970's and leveled off after that." Further, the report states:

> "there is abundant evidence of a problem requiring policy initiatives. School crime and disruption should be recognized as a significant problem, one that must receive open attention and public concern. If a school district has reason to think that its schools might have serious troubles, it should assess the problem and give it primary consideration. "Schools themselves can and should do a great deal to reduce crime and disruption, but an adequate program to deal with the problem requires that cooperation and resources that can come only through local planning supplemented by financial and technical assistance."

As indicated above, the problem of student crime and violence goes beyond the school to include parents, the community, institutions and agencies at all levels. Hence, the solutions must come from a combined effort of all concerned, including the student.

In addressing a problem of this magnitude, forceful and effective leadership is needed at all levels of government — national, state and local.

The State Board of Education is in the process of developing its own long range educational responses to "youths in difficulty," such as the Neighborhood Education Centers, proposed Reform of Secondary Education and Youth Employment Legislation.

However, more needs to be done, especially in terms of the immediate concerns of school administrators and parents relative to student crime in the school, and the extent to which the school curriculum addresses the problem.

This report, with its *list of indicators* (Attachment B) and recommendations, is the result of many hours of meetings, debates and discussions of a statewide Ad Hoc Committee (Attachment C) appointed by Dr. John Porter in 1976. In addition, a subcommittee of secondary school principals appointed by the Executive Committee

of the Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals, met during the summer of 1977 to refine and modify this document. Hopefully, with the implementation of its recommendations, where appropriate, the means will be provided for developing a more comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach to juvenile delinquency prevention in the schools.

Upon reading this report and the recommendations it is essential for one to keep in mind the fact that various interdependent factors are responsible for causing the problems of student nonconstructive behavior (violence, crime and vandalism) in the schools, hence many interdependent programs will be required in resolving these problems. Resolution to the problems do not lie with educators alone. Rather it will require a combination of forces — students, parents, educators, public officials, the legislature, the Governor's Office, business, labor and community — to implement desired changes and improve educational opportunities for all.

INDICATORS OF DIFFICULTY

A. *Considering the socio-economic status of the Community and the total pupil enrollment in each building, a high school is considered to be experiencing internal and external difficulties when one or a number of indicators appear.*

B. *The severity and extent of the indicated difficulty will be assessed and determined by the Executive Committee of the local School-Community Advisory Council.*

C. The indicators *are not:*

- used as criteria for assessing or evaluating the performance or competency of the high school administration and staff
- meant to serve as an "indictment" of the kind or style of high school administrative leadership or teaching technique.

D. *Once the difficulties have been identified the principal should, of course, attempt to resolve the problems at the level of occurrence with available resources.*

E. *Only after all local remedies and resources have been utilized and exhausted should the principal then seek outside assistance following consultation with the district superintendent and School-Community Group.*

Indicators of Difficulty

1. Disruptive and persistent loitering of students and nonstudents in and around the school building.
2. The annual dropout rate of the school is 10% higher than the annual statewide average dropout rate or the annual dropout rate for minority students is 10% higher than the state wide average on a proportionate basis. Variables which may affect the degree of existence include:
   a. Factory/industry hiring rate
   b. Migratory labor market
   c. Age of majority students
   d. Students 16 years and older (beyond compulsory attendance age)

3. The annual suspension rate is 10% higher than the annual district wide average suspension rate on a per one thousand student ratio.
4. The number of student graduating each year is 25% less than the number of students beginning the 9th grade four years earlier. Variables which may affect the degree of existence include:
   a. The % of students who are working full time
   b. The % of students who have dropped out and in the military
   c. The % of students who have dropped out of day school and enrolled in evening adult or continuing education programs
5. The annual absenteeism rate is 10% higher than the annual absenteeism average of the district.
6. The number of student referrals to Juvenile Court exceeds 5% of the student body.
7. The number of fights between students and/or nonstudents *involving weapons* is excessive.
8. The level of basic skills achievement in reading and mathematics of students is 10 months or more below the statewide basic skills average.
9. The annual turnover in administrative and teacher personnel is 10% or more above the annual distict turnover average.
10. The annual repair cost resulting from property vandalism exceeds the school's budgetary line item designated to cover vandalism.
11. Lack of student, parent, and community involvement in planning as determined by personal observation and inquiry.
12. The average annual unemployment level of students is equal to or above the statewide student average annual employment level.

Short Range Conclusion

These are activities and programs that a secondary school building could undergo immediately upon recommendation by and agreement among the necessary parties involved — board of education, central administration, teachers, students, parents and community. The grades focused upon are 7-12 and the objective should be treatment of disruptive youth. Recommendations for such activities and programs follow.

Short Range Recommendations

Each identified secondary school seeking assistance in resolving problems resulting from student crime, violence, and vandalism should be provided the resources and flexibility to implement the following recommendations.

1. Establish a School-Community Advisory Council in each school that desires to participate with representation from: (a) students, (b) teachers, (c) school administration, (e) civic leaders, (f) industry-business, and (g) labor.
2. The Central Administration and/or the Principal, in consultation with the School Advisory Council, should (if necessary) develop an administrative team that will assist the principal in implementing programmatic changes within the high school.
   The primary function of the Advisory Council would be to provide parental and community support of the high school(s).

3. Provide human relations and interpersonal training for staff, students and parents. Workshops and inservice training should improve communication skills among staff, students, parents, and community groups.
4. In cooperation and planning with surrounding business, industry, governmental and civic organizations, establish an ongoing and practical school-job program, guaranteeing employment to each student willing and able to work.
5. Develop a goal-directed Group Counseling program utilizing the systemic approach and involving both *students and parents*. The group counseling program should be an integral part of the school-work program, combining education, career planning, training and on-the-job training within the school-business-industry-community setting.
6. Where appropriate, develop a "Push for Excellence Program," wherein the immediate school and community become involved in the educational program with emphasis on creating a positive attitudinal climate toward education by the student and parent.
   (a) *Students*, of course, are at the heart of this effort because they must be convinced that education is a *must*, and self-control and self-discipline are necessary means toward that end.
   (b) *Teachers* must believe that their students have the desire to learn and *expect them to perform*.
   (c) *Administrators* must be committed to and *responsible* for the total educational programs within their schools.
   (d) *Parents* must be *involved* in the school program and *concerned* with the education of their children.
   (e) *Civic leaders* must become more *involved and responsible* for student outcomes and community support for student achievements.
   (f) *Industry-Business* must *be more sensitive* to the intrinsic worth of the educational program and more creative in providing employment opportunities and cooperative training programs.
   (g) *Labor* must extend its responsibility beyond bargaining consensus to *provide the schools with positive programs of work adjustment* and models of character building.

Long Range Conclusion

Those programs and objectives of a more substantive nature, designed to remedy historical habit and change behavior, need to be studied and implemented based upon a written plan of action agreed upon by all parties involved. The parties involved must include all segments of the community and must be committed to changing and improving the system for the benefit of all concerned. It is assumed that some cost will be involved. This includes agencies such as Social Services, Juvenile Justice, Mental Health, Natural Resources, etc. The focus here will be

grades K-12 with emphasis on diagnosis, prevention and treatment. But more importantly, it must be understood that emphasis in education in attempting to solve the multifaceted problems of student crime, violence, and vandalism should be on assisting the secondary school as a social institution in being more responsive to the needs of students, rather than attempting to treat the many individual factors responsible for the problem.

The State of Michigan needs to take a leadership role in focusing attention on the fact that crime, violence and vandalism within schools is a societal condition that must be addressed by the greater community beyond the walls of the school building where the student is involved *less than one tenth* of the time. Therefore, the following long range recommendations are proposed.

Long Range Recommendations

1. The Governor should appoint a statewide interagency commission on Student Behavior and Parent Involvement. Its function would be to identify underlying problems and issues impeding positive educational outcomes for students and recommend programs and solutions which would tend to alleviate and prevent such impediments.
2. Once the problem is defined and the scope and causes determined, the Commission, based upon this information and its experiences, should develop constructive and feasible program recommendations designed to change positively the institution, better adapting it to respond to human needs.

   Some of the priority issues to be considered by such a Commission would be:

   - Coordinating total community involvement
   - Interpersonal humanization of the schools
   - Teacher and administrator selection and training
   - Development and expansion of a group counseling and diagnostic system
   - Adequate program funding
   - Organization and staffing of programs
   - Evaluation and replication of programs

Conclusion

Both of the above recommeded approaches, the short and long range, can be expanded or amended as one sees fit. But the essence and the intent of the recommendations are sound, based upon the varied experiences and backgrounds of the committee members and staff research of the problem. One thing is quite clear — something *different* has to be done. Students and Parents, as well as teachers, administrators and others, who are experiencing problems of non-constructive behavior are suffering irreparable harm, both educationally, socially and economically. The state is the loser. But in a real sense, the loss is personal and tragic in the form of one individual young mind. Somehow we cannot allow this to continue to happen.

ATTACHMENT A

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The timing of this report appears most appropriate considering the following recent developments:

December 1977 — Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Joseph Califano appeared on national television wherein he emphasized the critical need to address the problem inherent in juvenile delinquency as reported in the NIE Study "Violent Schools — Safe Schools" the Safe School Study Report to the Congress.

February 1978 — Michigan Legislative Senate Resolution No. 427 introduced — creating a special committee to study violence in Michigan schools.

March 1978 — The Michigan Department of Education at the request of the State Superintendent, convened over 40 representatives (superintendent, secondary school principals) from school districts to district programs and approaches to student behavior and school violence.

April 1978 — National Assembly on Juvenile Justice Education St. Charles, Illinois called by the Council of Chief State School Officers.

April 1978 — Follow up by the Michigan Department of Education to earlier conference on juvenile delinquency prevention.

April 1978 — Revision of the Juvenile Justice Code, Department of Social Services; State of Michigan.

In the context of the above events and the "list of indicators" depicting schools experiencing difficulty, the basis is established for developing effective and insightful State Board of Education responses to juvenile delinquency and violence in the schools.

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

INDICATORS OF DIFFICULTY

Indicators	Prevalence of Difficulty	Available Data
1. Disruptive and persistent loitering of students and nonstudents in and around the school building.		
2. The annual dropout rate of the school is 10% higher than the annual statewide average dropout rate or the annual dropout rate for minority students is 10% higher than the statewide average on a proportionate basis. Variables which may affect the degree of existence include: a. Factory/industry hiring rate b. Migratory labor market c. Age of majority students d. Students 16 years and older (beyond compulsory attendance age)		
3. The annual suspension rate is 10% higher than the annual district wide average suspension rate on a per one thousand student ratio.		
4. The number of students graduating each year is 25% less than the number of students beginning the 9th grade four years earlier. Variables which may affect the degree of existence include: a. The % of students who are working full time b. The % of students who have dropped out and in the military c. The % of students who have dropped out of day school and enrolled in evening adult or continuing education programs		
5. The annual absenteeism rate is 10% higher than the annual absenteeism average of the district.		
6. The number of student referrals to Juvenile Court exceeds 5% of the student body.		
7. The number of fights between students and/or nonstudents *involving weapons* is excessive.		
8. The level of basic skills achievement in reading and mathematics of students is 10 months or more below the statewide basic skills average.		

INDICATORS OF DIFFICULTY *(Continued)*

Indicators	Prevalence of Difficulty	Available Data
9. The annual turnover in administrative and teacher personnel is 10% or more above the annual district turnover average.		
10. The annual repair cost resulting from property vandalism exceeds the school's budgetary line item designated to cover vandalism.		
11. Lack of student, parent, and community involvement in planning as determined by personal observation and inquiry.		
12. The average annual unemployment level of students is equal to or above the statewide average annual employment level.		

ATTACHMENT C

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